

May 1989

# THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

## REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 85th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Held on 24, 25 and 26 March 1989

At Chiswick Town Hall, London

<u>ATTENDANCES:</u>	<u>N° of Branches</u> <u>represented</u>	<u>N° of Delegates</u> <u>sitting</u>	<u>Branches not represented</u>
<u>Friday 24 March</u>			
11.30 a.m.	16	26	Bournemouth, Dundee, Lancaster, Seaham, Yorkshire
3.00 p.m.	15	33	Bournemouth, Dundee, Lancaster, Newcastle, Seaham, Yorkshire
<u>Saturday 25 March</u>			
11.00 a.m.	15		Bournemouth, Dundee, Manchester, Merseyside, Seaham, Yorkshire
2.45 p.m.	16		Bournemouth, Dundee, Merseyside, Seaham, Yorkshire
<u>Sunday 26 March</u>			
2.30 p.m.	16	29	Bournemouth, Dundee, Newcastle, Seaham, Yorkshire

FRIDAY, 24 MARCH  
Morning

1. Election of Chair and Deputy Chair  
Two nominations for the chair were proposed: P.Bennett and D.Donnelly. P.Bennett was elected by 17 votes to 6 for D.Donnelly. D.Donnelly was unanimously elected Deputy Chair.
2. Election of Tellers and Standing Orders Committee  
A. Waite was elected to serve on this Committee for the duration of Conference with C.Skelton who had been appointed by the EC.
3. Permission for Delegates to Sit  
P. Hope (General Secretary) reported that no Form C had been received from Dundee or Seaham branches and that the Form had been sent in late by Eccles and Newcastle branches.  
H.Cottis (E.London) and R. Cook (Birmingham) moved that the delegates from Eccles and Newcastle be allowed to sit.  
C.May (NW London): as the branches had broken the rule they should be allowed to sit but not to vote.  
C.Ashford (Eccles): it would be undemocratic to disfranchise in this way a group of members who had voted on the agenda. It should also be borne in mind that Eccles was a very active branch that held three propaganda meetings a month, leaving less time for internal Party business.  
D.Donnelly (Glasgow): no rule had been broken. Rule 8 was in fact being applied as it specifically provided for Conference to decide in the case of late Form Cs.  
The motion to allow the delegates from Eccles and Newcastle to sit was carried by 24-2.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION No 1: The Implementation of Rule 8 and the New Voting Procedure at Conference (NW London)

C. May (NW London), introducing this item, said that a problem had arisen over members unable to get to the branch meeting called to discuss and vote on the agenda; such members were disfranchised. The Party should consider allowing them to vote in writing as now happened with Central Branch members.

S.Easton (EC Member): the intention of those who had proposed the recent amendment had been that only the votes should be counted of those who actually attended the special branch meetings.

H.Edwards (W London): what Comrade May had proposed was logical, but the Rule would have to be amended again.

C.May (NW London), D.Donnelly (Glasgow), P.Hart (SW London) and H.Cottis (E London) spoke in favour of branch delegates calling out their branch's votes as under the previous system rather than simply handing them in to the Standing Orders Committee to add up.  
The Chair said he would follow this procedure.

4. Order in which items are to be taken  
The delegates agreed to follow the order set out in the Final Agenda.  
A Roll Call was held. J.Dunn (Yorkshire) said that due to a mix-up there had been no quorum at his branch's special meeting and asked to be allowed to represent the branch in discussion. The Chair said that this was perfectly in order as any member could speak at Conference.
  5. Amendments to Rule and Motions for Resolution
- V1 "This Conference re-affirms that the Declaration of Principles, which every member signs on joining, takes precedence over any other action or Resolution passed at Conference or the ADM" (NW London).  
C. May (NW London), opening, said there were some decisions that could not be made by Conference. For example, Conference could not have accepted the ideas of Guildford branch as they manifestly conflicted with the Declaration of Principles. Similarly, Conference did not have

the power to change the Party's name as this was incorporated in the D of P. The resolution carried at last year's Conference on the use of the Party's name was therefore out of order, especially as it was only carried by a small majority of 32 to 15.

S.Coleman(Islington): this was an attempt to introduce the notion of fundamental law into the Party's constitution, which would mean that Party democracy would no longer take precedence. Conference could alter the D of P or its wording and Conference was entitled to change Party policy. Members make the decision and a majority was a majority. It was quite absurd to argue that because "of Great Britain" appeared in the D of P the Party could not decide to abbreviate its name for propaganda and publicity purposes. More worrying was the fact that NW London had refused to apply this majority decision. Passing this resolution would give them a charter to go on behaving in an undemocratic manner by allowing them to ignore any Conference decision on the grounds that, in their view, it conflicted with the D of P. The resolution should be voted down.

J.Usher(W London): although 3 members of his branch were in favour of the resolution the rest were against. It was a ridiculous resolution as it was in effect saying that no matter what Conference passes any individual member can ignore this on the basis of a personal interpretation of the D of P. If a branch didn't like a Conference resolution, it should try to call a Party Poll; in the meantime it had to carry out the terms of the resolution.

R.Cook(Birmingham): most of his branch's members had abstained as it was a bad resolution. We all agreed with the D of P but there hasn't been a change of name. All that was decided was to use the abbreviated version for some purposes. This had been democratically debated and decided. What NW London were proposing was not democracy but autocracy.

H.Cottis (E London): our name is the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The use of the term "Socialist Party" had gone too far.

C.Slapper (Islington): some members felt trapped by this resolution since if they voted against they would seem to be rejecting the D of P. Why hadn't NW London simply put down a resolution rescinding the one carried last year? That would have been more honest. Instead they were trying to get their way by the back door, through a trick. Besides, the Declaration of Principles of the different Companion Parties was slightly different. What did NW London make of that?

D.Donnelly(Glasgow): the resolution was damaging but not mischievous. If problems had arisen over last year's resolution this was due to some branches not carrying it out. The D of P was indeed the sheet anchor of the Party, but it was a set of working principles not a declaration that those who drew it up in 1904 knew everything. In any event, there was no move in the Party to change it, but if there were to be then Conference would have to decide the matter democratically by a majority vote. He appealed to all branches to fall in line with Conference decisions.

B.Johnson(Swansea): if this resolution was carried every Conference would be bound by the D of P. There'd be nothing on the agenda except the D of P! This was absurd. Also, the D of P itself had been adopted by a Conference decision.

G.Howlett(Camden): there was never any secret that the resolution carried last year was about the Party's name. It was self-evident that the D of P over-rides any Conference decision.

R.Headicar(Islington): speaking as a new member who had been disillusioned with the lack of democracy in the Labour Party and amongst the anarchists, it was disturbing that democratic Conference decisions were being challenged. Conference could discuss the Party's name and could decide to abbreviate it.

J.Bradley(Enfield and Haringey): there was no move to change the Party's name; nor was it true that last year's resolution changed the name. Nevertheless he couldn't vote against the NW London resolution. Common sense should prevail on this issue with minority rights being respected.

H.Young (non-delegate): once you began amending the Party's name you end up amending the principles and abolishing the Party.

P.Hart (SW London): her branch was overwhelmingly opposed to the NW

Resolution even if it hadn't been in favour of last year's resolution. This was because NW London falsely linked the D of P with the Party's full name. If the Party's name had always to be used in full, did this mean that all the other phrases of the D of P had always to be used in full too?

S. Easton (EC Member): some delegates were confusing a name with the thing it refers to. Names are variable objects and can be changed without changing the thing they refer to. The resolution was NW London's last try on this issue, but it just wasn't on.

C. May (NW London), winding up, said that if this resolution was thrown out this would certainly not be their last try. It was his branch's view that only a Party Poll not Conference could change the D of P. They were not against the use of "the Socialist Party" but objected to being told they couldn't use "the Socialist Party of Great Britain". As to the sanctity of Conference resolutions, there were dozens that had never been carried out, for instance on having a paid organiser and publishing various pamphlets. The branch was not trying to trick other branches, but if "the Socialist Party of Great Britain" was confusing in propaganda it was confusing on all occasions, so the issue of changing the name to "the Socialist Party" should go to a Poll of all the members.

Before the vote was taken, the Chair said he had received a report from the Standing Orders Committee that, according to the credentials form of the delegate from Newcastle, only 3 members had been present at the special meeting of the branch to consider the Conference agenda; this meant that they were inquorate. He therefore had to rule that their delegate could not sit and that their votes could not be counted.

R. Cook (Birmingham) agreed that the chair had no alternative but to rule in this way, but there was an anomaly. The new procedure meant that members voted individually so there was no logical reason why, if there were only 3 members present, their votes could not be counted.

G. Woods (Central Branch Secretary) agreed that the Rule needed looking at again, especially as Central Branch members voted individually without the quorum question arising.

G. Howlett (Camden) too didn't see why members' votes couldn't be counted even if there wasn't a quorum at their meeting.

The Chair said that it was clear that the new Rule 22 needed cleaning up, but in the meantime it had to be applied in its present form which ruled out what was being suggested.

H. Edwards (W London) and C. Pinel (Manchester) asked whether abstentions were going to be recorded.

C. Slapper (Islington): if they were, this would increase the work of the Standing Orders Committee by a third.

The Chair ruled that, as the new Rule 22 referred only to the recording of votes "for" and "against" and did not mention abstentions these latter should not be recorded.

The vote then took place and the resolution (V1) was lost 72-76.

- V2 Amendment to Rule 33: "After the second sentence insert 'Branches shall hold at least one specially summoned meeting to discuss the charge'" (E London).
- V3 Further amendment to Rule 33: "At the end of the third sentence, replace full stop with a semi-colon, then add 'after which no further circulation of arguments for or against the charge may take place'" (E London).
- V5 "This Conference resolves that in the event of any future charge against a member or Branch, no further statements or letters be sent after the discussion at Conference or Autumn Delegate Meeting. Further, that the voting papers be circulated only after the official report of Conference or Autumn Delegate Meeting has been sent to Branches and Central Branch members" (NW London).
- V4 Amendment to V5: "After 'report of' insert 'the relevant discussion and recommendation of'" (W London).
- H. Cottis (E London), opening on the two separate amendments to Rule 33, said that his branch felt strongly that there should be no further correspondence after a Conference or Delegate Meeting had decided the

the wording of a Party Poll concerning a charge against a member. C. May (NW London), opening on the resolution, said it was aimed at stopping a repeat of the débâcle that had followed last ADM in the P; Wilson affair. After the ADM there was a shower of correspondence, some of it improper in that it was sent to selected individuals only and at their homes. After a charge had been agreed, there should be no further written communication except the official report of Conference or ADM. H. Edwards (W London), opening on the amendment, said his branch agreed with NW London, but wanted to improve their suggestion: it would quicker to have to get out only the relevant part, and not the whole report. D. Donnelly (Glasgow) agreed that further correspondence did cause confusion, but could see no way out. The resolution could be interpreted as stifling discussion. And what was a "circular" anyway? Would it include private letters or telephone calls? H. McLaughlin (Bolton): his branch was against the resolution. It was hasty legislation, based on a single case, that wouldn't work. What sanctions would or could be taken against those who might infringe it? P. Hart (SW London): there had to be an end to discussion at some point, otherwise a case could drag on for too long. C. May (NW London), winding up, said that the resolution proposed to stop written circulars not telephone or branch discussions. The first amendment to Rule 33(V2) was carried 109-39. The second amendment to Rule 33(V3) was carried 75-72. The amendment(V4) to the resolution was carried 67-51 and the resolution, as amended, was carried 75-64.

#### Afternoon

##### Branch Reports

The various branches reported on the state of their branch and on activity over the previous year. Most were "ticking over" or "carrying on".

##### Report of the Central Organiser

S. Coleman (Central Organiser) drew attention to a number of resignations from members who were sick and tired of internal feuding in the Party. These were good Socialists who were leaving because of the self-indulgence of other members -- from whom he didn't necessarily exclude himself -- in this matter.

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey): the Party's membership was divided into three almost equal groups: London members, Provincial members and Central Branch members. The latter tended to get demoralised from reading EC reports about disputes because they were scattered and dispersed. Special attention ought to be paid over the coming years to involving Central Branch members in Party life and activity.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N° 2: Why is the Conference Agenda so boring? (Islington).

S. Coleman (Islington), opening, said the branch's item was meant to be deadly serious not frivolous. A number of members were getting fed up with Conference as these had become dull and depressing. This year's agenda was a disgrace to the Party; it reflected nothing at all of the outside world. These were hard times for class-conscious workers in Britain, yet we appeared to be retreating into an internal world of our own.

C. Pinel (Manchester) suggested that Islington's own item was a contribution to the trivialisation of Conference.

D. Donnelly (Glasgow): Conference was a business meeting not a Party rally and unfortunately democracy was sometimes boring.

C. Ashcroft (Eccles): This Conference agenda is boring as is shown by the next item on inserting full stops and semi-colons in Rule 10 apparently with the aim of stopping branches producing their own leaflets.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N°3: The misuse of EC Minutes by branches to attack other branches (Glasgow).

V. Vanni (Glasgow), opening, deplored the trend towards branches using EC Minutes to snipe at other branches often without first taking the matter up with these branches. When the Conference had voted a few years ago

that branch resolutions had to appear in full in EC Minutes this was to avoid the risk of the EC editing out any criticism of itself and not to allow branches to make public criticisms of each other.

- V11 Rule 10: Islington branch proposed a lengthy re-wording of this Rule. Five amendments to their re-wording were proposed by, respectively, Enfield and Haringey (two: V9 and V10), Dundee (V8), Islington (V7) and NW London and W London (same amendment: V6). For details refer to the Final Agenda.
- V12 Amendment to Rule 10: "At the end of the rule add 'Election Statements and Election Manifestos, being official Party Statements, must be approved by the Executive Committee'" (W London).
- V13 Amendment to Rule 17: "One line two, after 'Party literature' insert 'Election Statements and Election Manifestos must be approved by the Executive Committee before printing'. The Rule then to continue: 'They shall establish...'" (W London).
- V14 "This Conference rules that all election manifestos, statements and propaganda material related to elections, both national and local, must be endorsed by the EC" (SW London).
- V15 "That this Conference instructs the EC that in future local and national election manifestos be vetted by the EC before publication" (Glasgow).  
C. Slapper (Islington), opening on the branch's amendment to Rule 10, said that a few years ago Rule 10 had been amended to allow branches to bring out their own leaflets without having first to get approval either of the EC or of some other Committee. This was a good move, but it now appeared necessary to make an exception to this, but only for election manifestos. J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey), on his branch's two amendments, said that not just branch election material but all branch leaflets should be approved centrally; if branches wanted to get out a leaflet quickly they could use material that had already appeared in the Standard, etc. C. May (NW London), on his branch's amendment, said it wasn't at all clear what was meant by "small pamphlet size". He asked what in Rule 10 in its present form allowed Eccles to produce a branch journal. H. Edwards (W London), opening on his branch's various amendments, said his branch was happy with Rule 10 as it stood, except concerning election manifestos which in its view as Party statements should be vetted and approved by the EC. P. Lawrence (SW London), on his branch's resolution, said it was OK for branches to produce leaflets on local issues but election material was different. D. Donnelly (Glasgow), opening on the Glasgow resolution, said that in the past the Party had been very centralised in its control of literature; now control was more relaxed but we had had a bad experience with one of Swansea's manifestos recently, so reluctantly we had to become a bit more centralist again, but only for elections. R. Cook (Birmingham): what was being attempted was to try to legislate against the possibility of error, but you couldn't make rules against this. In any event, why should we be afraid about making an occasional mistake?  
B. Johnson (Swansea) said he was in some difficulty since he was in a minority in his branch, but would nevertheless try to put the majority view fairly. Rule 10 had allowed Swansea to do what they did; they had contested the local elections three times, but on the last occasion had decided to experiment (candidate's photo, use of 'I', etc). There had been a total over-reaction to this. The proposed new Rule could discourage branches from participating in elections, especially as it might delay approval of the manifesto for up to three months. The Party should learn to trust branches over the content of their election material.  
R. Headicar (Islington): there seemed to be some confusion over what was a manifesto, a pamphlet or a leaflet, the content of each of which was to be controlled in different ways. Members should have enough faith in other members to allow them to get on doing things in the way they judged best. Why not a national manifesto plus full local initiative for leaflets? The worst outcome would be to stifle initiative.  
J. Krauze (Camden): his branch was opposed to changing either Rule 10 or

Rule 17. A sincere attempt was being made to try to clarify matters but the branch didn't think it would work. He couldn't agree with Comrade Cook that the solution was to let mistakes be corrected by the pressure of democratic Party opinion; there had to be some legislation to prevent errors.

C. May (NW London): approval of an election manifesto doesn't have to take three months, so the time factor was irrelevant to the discussion.

S. Easton (EC Member): a distinction could be drawn between election communications and statements (produced locally) and the election manifesto (a short pamphlet, produced nationally).

C. Slapper (Islington), winding up, said that there was a distinction between election material (leaflets, posters, etc) and the election statement. In the branch's view only the latter needed central approval.

V7 was lost 53-75, V8 was lost 29-104, V9 was lost 16-105, V10 was lost 32-90. V6 was carried 65-60 but the Islington amendment (V11), as so amended, was then lost 43-83.

V12 was carried 78-66. V13 was carried 81-56. V14 was carried 82-62.

V15 was carried 98-48.

V17 "That this Conference instructs the EC to ensure that in future no photograph of the candidate appear on the election manifestos" (Glasgow).

V16 Amendment to V17: "Delete the last word and replace with 'material'" (W London).

V18 "That this Conference instructs the EC to ensure that in future the election manifestos be addressed to 'Fellow Workers' and not to 'Dear Electors'" (Glasgow).

V. Vanni (Glasgow), opening on his branch's two resolutions, said Glasgow considered neither saying 'Dear Electors' instead of 'Fellow Workers' nor putting the candidate's photo on the manifesto as being innovative or imaginative.

H. Edwards (W London), on his branch's amendment, said the intention was to make the Glasgow resolution on photos more precise. On the other issue of laying down "Fellow Workers" as the only permissible form of address, the branch disagreed with Glasgow.

R. Cook (Birmingham) complained about the phrase "instructs the EC to ensure". Why this urge to always have control from the top?

S. Coleman (Islington): whether or not the photo should appear was a matter of principle, though not of primary principle. So if the Party voted for it, he would accept it, but the Party had not voted for it and Swansea should have waited for Conference to decide before experimenting on this matter. Why should we always have to say "Fellow Workers"? What was important about what we had to say was the content not the form of words employed. It would be ridiculous to have to use this particular form on all occasions and under all circumstances.

B. Johnson (Swansea): the Party can exclude photos from its manifesto but it can't stop the media insisting on a photo to accompany any statement they might want to publish from us. Once again, this was an over-reaction to an experiment and before it had been completed. The Party must be prepared to experiment, allowing flexibility in the light of local conditions.

G. Howlett (Camden): a photo couldn't help put over our case and was in fact quite irrelevant to it.

H. Young (non-delegate): the change from "Fellow Workers" to "Dear Electors" was a concession to ignorance and prejudice and was reformist ---

S. Coleman (Islington): Point of Order! Under Clause 15 of Conference Standing Orders Comrade Young was not entitled to refer to other members as "reformist".

S. Easton (EC Member): we didn't have to first approach everybody as "workers" if only because most people wouldn't know what we meant by working class. Nor did photos mean a personalised campaign.

E. Goodman (EC Member): the objection was not just to the photo, but also to the personalism represented by the use of 'I'. On the other issue, Glasgow were being too strict in trying to stop innovation. After all, our message was also addressed to capitalists.

K.Knight(non-delegate): capitalists could indeed join the socialist party, even in their own interests, as to avoid perishing in a nuclear war. But there was a distinction: we didn't need their support whereas we did need that of the working class, so we must address our appeal to the latter.

D.Donnelly(Glasgow),winding up, said the resolutions were not an appeal for things to be controlled from the top, but an instruction to the committee which manages our affairs between Conferences not to use photos. We must control our own literature even if we can't control what the media do.

The amendment(V16) to the first Glasgow resolution(V17) was carried 99-39 and the resolution, as amended, was then carried 98-49.

The second Glasgow resolution(V18) was lost 69-73.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N°4:In the light of (a)the particular importance of electoral activity in the work of the Party, (b)the effort required and challenges involved in mounting any worthwhile campaign, and (c) the danger of problems arising from lack of co-ordination and haphazard use of resources, does the Party need a clearly established procedure for determining goals, planning activity and co-ordinating efforts from one election to another? (Islington).

C.Slapper(Islington) asked Conference's permission for an EC Member, comrade S.Easton to open up on the branch's behalf.

S.Easton(EC Member) expounded the reasons for replying yes to the question posed.

B.Johnson(Swansea) was glad to learn that Islington were now contemplating contesting local elections.

J.Bradley(Enfield and Haringey):it was important that any electoral strategy should fit in with the Party's general strategy.

T.Oakley(Newcastle) confirmed that the branch still planned to contest the European elections in June, but they would finance the campaign entirely themselves.

C.Skelton(non-delegate): our main purpose in contesting elections was to win political power; a secondary purpose was publicity. Neither purpose would be achieved by contesting the European elections. The constituencies were too big and our efforts would be wasted even if we had the funds.

D.Donnelly(Glasgow): there was a problem here. The EC had decided that it could not approve contesting the European elections, but Newcastle still say they are going ahead. There was a conflict here which Conference would have to decide on.

The Chair said the wording of Rule 27A was explicit enough: "Any branch proposing to contest elections, National, European or Local, shall first obtain permission from the Executive Committee".

R.Headicar(Islington):things were in danger of getting out of hand. We shouldn't make the mistake of taking away local initiative from branches.

L.Cox(EC Member): we've got a constitutional problem here. What should the EC do when Newcastle submitted their manifesto for approval?

S.Coleman(Islington):the problem wouldn't arise. Everybody knew that the branch won't be in a position to be self-financing, but if they did go ahead without EC approval they would be acting unconstitutionally with all the consequences that that would involve. Newcastle should be realistic and contest the local elections first.

P.Lawrence(SW London): a number of problems arose in connection with local elections. First, the electoral law required the candidate to live in the borough. Second, our own Rule 28 required us to put forward the full number of candidates in the ward to be contested, which was often three. Why was this? Shouldn't this Rule be changed?

C.Slapper(Islington):his branch had discussed Newcastle's plan to contest and had decided that as the EC's objection had been cash, Newcastle should be allowed to contest if they could raise all the money themselves.

V.Vanni(Glasgow) drew attention to the Newcastle branch's Form C which showed an average attendance at branch meetings of only 5 members. It was not serious to imagine that such a small number could cover a European constituency which was the size of 7 or 8 parliamentary ones.

E.Grant (EC Member) suspected that the Party's financial situation was being invoked by some members as a pretext for not doing what they didn't want to do anyway, that is, contesting elections. Newcastle had removed this objection by saying they would finance the campaign themselves. They deserved Party support for their campaign.

C.McEwan (Glasgow): we should only contest elections when we've a reasonable chance of winning them. As to publicity, we didn't get it and when we did it was bad publicity. We were linked with the Raving Loony Party as people thought we were mad to continue contesting elections and getting derisory votes.

The Chair said the issue would come up again the next day when another delegate from Newcastle would be present with further information.

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SATURDAY, 25 MARCH

Morning (financial matters)

D.Deutz (Treasurer) presented his report together with the Financial Statement which showed that as at 31 December 1988 the Party had only £7508 in the bank.

H.Edwards (W London): it appeared we'd be running out of money in 3 or 4 months time.

R.Cook (Birmingham): we should consider a levy on every member calculated to raise the money we thought we would have to spend over the next 12 months.

D.Donnelly (Glasgow): dues must be increased.

A.Buick (EC Member) said he didn't think extra money could be raised by a compulsory levy, so the only alternative was voluntary donations. We were moving towards a two-tier system of financing the Party: a nominal amount from dues + a contribution members thought they could afford. This latter could be done by making out a bank standing order in favour of the Party, as some 40 or so members had already done, assuring the Party an annual income of over £2000, in response to last year's appeal.

J.Usher (W London): we needed to raise money from as many members as possible and this would have to be more or less compulsory.

R.Headicar (Islington) agreed that we needed to find a regular source of income, but was against a compulsory levy.

S.Easton (EC Member) spoke in favour of a system of compulsory dues + an annual donation which could vary from year to year according to the Party's needs.

D.Deutz (Treasurer) said that to cover the deficit of £8000 a year on the Head Office Account (i.e., all matters save Literature, Publicity, Elections and Propaganda) would require 500 members to pay an extra £16 a year. If the deficit on the Socialist Standard account was to be covered too this would need to be £22.

B.Johnson (Swansea): small savings could be made at HO.

C.Slapper (Islington), speaking as the Head Office assistant, confirmed this and drew delegates' attention to the increase in the item "sundry" in the income column from £106 in 1987 to £691 in 1988. This represented extra payments for the phone, canteen and the photocopier. He added that the appeal in the Standard had brought in donations totalling £3000.

In answer to a question P.Shannon (Lancaster) explained that his branch was in the process of settling its outstanding literature bill. They had been paying dues all along and had now decided to finance their own propaganda activities. They were good socialists even if not always good bookkeepers.

D.Deutz (Treasurer) confirmed that, due to the turnover of HO Assistants in recent years and the different systems they had each employed, there had been errors in the book-keeping resulting in some branches' outstanding bills appearing to be greater than in fact they were. This was now being put right.

P.Hart (SW London): dues had last been increased in 1981 and were now too low, but a compulsory levy was out. Other things could be done like making those over 65 liable to pay dues.

D.Donnelly (Glasgow): why can't we decide today to increase dues in view of the Party's financial situation even if doing this wasn't strictly legal?

R.Cook (Birmingham): only a recommendation and not a binding resolution was permissible.

R.Headicar(Islington):we couldn't ignore the Rulebook on this issue even if every delegate agreed since this would set a bad precedent. The Chair said it would be out of order to amend the Rule in this way without going through the procedure laid down in the Rulebook.

P.Shannon(Lancaster): if members don't pay now, they won't pay even if you increase dues.

B.Johnson(Swansea) and J.Usher(W London)moved that "This Conference recommends the EC to introduce a supplement to dues of £1 per month". The Chair ruled that this was in order as it was only a recommendation.

D.Donnelly(Glasgow) and V.Vanni(Glasgow) moved to amend the motion to read as follows:

"That in view of the financial position of the Party, this Conference urges all members to pay double dues immediately as an emergency measure, until the dues can be raised to a more realistic level at next Conference. The amendment was carried 30-3 and the substantive resolution 23-1.

C.Slapper(Islington) asked what had happened to the proposal, discussed at the EC, to increase the price of the Standard to 50p.

A.Buick(EC Member)replied that the EC had decided on another strategy: to keep the price at 40p for the time being but to cut the number of pages from 16 to 20. A price increase to 50p wasn't ruled out in the future, perhaps, if further planned economies could be made, with an increase in the number of pages to 20 again.

#### Fraternal Greetings

Messages were read from Alec Hart in South Africa and from the Socialist Party of New Wealand.

J.Sideris(World Socialist Party of Australia), who was present, addressed the Conference. He explained that the vast distances --Australia was the size of the whole of Europe-- made joint activity amongst comrades difficult. He himself came from W.Australia while most of the other comrades were in the East. Nevertheless a socialist journal had been published on a regular basis a few years ago. This had provided valuable experience for when the Party expanded at a later date.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N°5:How can the Party best expand its propaganda and literature in view of our serious financial situation? (W London).

H.Edwards(W London),opening,said we must obviously continue and even expand our present level of socialist activity despite the Party's financial situation, but this would mean that we would have to use the least costly methods.

S.Easton(EC Member)urged the use of phone-in programmes and letters to the press.

S.Coleman(Islington): on phone-in programmes you could reach up to 500,000 to a million people while at the best of outdoor meetings the maximum was 500.The outdoor platform had become an anachronism.

P.Shannon(Lancaster) suggested a fly-poster campaign by members to advertise the Party case rather than just meetings.

R.Marshall(E London): we must find cheap means of attracting attention to our case. What about organising our own demonstrations and sit-ins?

C.Skelton(non-delegate): there should be lectures on topical subjects.

R.Cook(Birmingham): it wasn't easy to speak on radio or appear on TV. He suggested that at a future Conference a workshop could be organised on microphone and camera techniques.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N° 6: Do branches make a sufficient financial commitment to the Party and should they be less demanding on HO central funds? (Glasgow)

V.Vanni(Glasgow),opening, said some branches seemed to regard HO as an extension of Social Security and ask for money for everything. OK, that had stopped now, but when we did get some more funds we must not go back to the old ways.

C.Slapper(Islington): there were some occasions when it was appropriate to ask HO for money and it was bad taste to compare this with Social Security. Branches were different: some had energy and no money, others had money and no energy; it was right that the latter should pay money to

HO to be redistributed to the active branches.

J.Usher(W London):Branches must get out of the habit of depending on HO for funds.

The Standing Orders Committee reported that, according to another Newcastle delegate who had arrived that day, the branch had held a further meeting later than the one which had appointed the delegates and which was inquorate; a quorum had been present at this meeting and had ratified the business of the previous meeting. This being so, their credentials were in order. Conference agreed that the delegates from Newcastle could resume their seats.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N°7: The need to set up a Socialist Standard Support Fund (W London).

H.Edwards(W London), opening, said that although the branch knew that it was the Party's tradition to only appeal for money for the General Fund, it nevertheless felt that it was absolutely necessary that the Standard should survive. If we set up a special Standard fund non-members might be prepared to contribute to it whereas they would not be prepared to contribute towards paying the rates on Head Office.

A.Atkinson(Islington) suggested the formation of a "100 Club" whose members would pledge say, £5 a month payable only if a minimum of 99 others did so too.

Afternoon

E.Fleischmann(non-delegate) who had just visited Vienna brought a message and fraternal greetings from the Bund Demokratischer Sozialisten our Companion Party in Austria.

V20 "This Conference affirms that the socialist mode of production and distribution cannot gradually evolve within capitalism. Whatever may be the effects within capitalism of the growth of the socialist movement, production for use --and the consequent disappearance of money/ commodity relations and wage labour-- cannot begin until after the socialist movement has won control of political power and has established the common ownership of the means of production and distribution by the whole community" (W London).

V19 Amendment to V20: "In line six delete all after 'control' and replace<sup>with</sup> 'democratically of political power and has established the common ownership of the means of production by and in the interest of the whole community'" (Enfield and Haringey).

H. Edwards(W London), opening, said the branch felt that it was necessary to re-affirm the Party position in view of some of the ideas put forward in the Guildford circular. The growing acceptance of the socialist proposition will of course lead to many changes in capitalist life; many reforms will be introduced that will improve the position of the working class. But the branch didn't think it helped to go into the hypothetical problems that might arise just before the establishment of socialism. Although the branch could accept that a growing acceptance of socialist ideas would have an effect on all aspects of life, it couldn't accept that capitalism involving, as it did, wage labour, buying and selling and money could gradually change into common ownership and production for use, which would imply that there would be a period when production for profit and production for use would exist at the same time. It was a impossible hypothesis to suggest that the two methods, capitalist and socialist, could exist side by side. It was true that in the past feudal and capitalist methods did exist side by side, but the change from feudalism to capitalism was a change from one form of minority class rule to another and both societies were based on private property. The revolution from capitalism to socialism, however, had to be carried out by and in the interests of a majority and its aim was to end all private ownership and class rule. The task of the Party at the moment was to convert the working class to socialist ideas. It was not yet time to go into details about the sort of questions raised in the Guildford circular. All we could say was that the change from the capitalist to the socialist mode of production had to be a revolutionary change.

J.Bradley(Enfield and Haringey), opening on the amendment, said the

branch was in general agreement with W London but wanted to tidy up their resolution on two crucial points, to emphasise that control of political power would be won democratically and that the means of life would be held in common not only by the whole community but also in the interest of the whole community.

B.Johnson(Swansea): Swansea agree with the resolution but don't see the need to repeat it, especially when the ideas in the Guildford circular were essentially those of a single member.

J.Usher(W London): West London accepted the Enfield and Haringey amendment. He personally had been inclined to take the view of Swansea but, after reading various recent circulars from Comrade R.Cox in which he threatened to resign if certain resolutions were carried, had changed his mind. Conference couldn't be blackmailed into not re-affirming a particular view by threats of resignation.

R.Cook(Birmingham): the views in the Guildford circular were not those of just one member. Others held them too; there was even a member of Birmingham branch who was sympathetic to them. These were members who had seen some hope, in the context of our failure to grow, in co-operative experiments like in Mondragon in Spain; it was an emotional state rather than a logical argument, a state which could have been dealt with by more contact and discussion. That was the lesson of the Guildford affair.

S.Eaton(EC Member): Comrade R.Cox and Guildford had been trying to make the point that the growth of the political movement for socialism would have certain effects within capitalism. They were not saying that the socialist mode of production could be introduced gradually and this was why they had spoken of "socialistic" rather than "socialist" institutions coming into being within capitalism. The most interesting phrase in the W London resolution was "whatever may be the effects within capitalism of the growth of the socialist movement..." It was these effects that we should be discussing and that Guildford had wanted to discuss.

C.Slapper(Islington): a narrow majority of the branch were against the resolution, not because they disagreed with its content but because they were unhappy about having to re-affirm something that everybody agreed was the Party case. This was superfluous, as last year's Conference had settled the matter. Besides, most of the Guildford members involved had since left the Party.

P.Shannon(Lancaster): his branch would be abstaining as it was a resolution you were obliged to agree with but there was the suspicion that it was a manoeuvre aimed at certain members.

C.Skelton(non-delegate): if there are members who are sympathetic to the view that capitalism could gradually evolve into socialism this was most certainly a matter that should be discussed at Conference. No doubt such members felt that a gradual evolution through co-operatives and self-help such as occurred during the Miners' Strike was easier than capturing political power.

S.Coleman(Islington): there have indeed been spontaneous movements in the course of working class struggles, as in the Miners Strike, which have refuted the capitalist image of workers. But this was not what Guildford were saying. But where were they? His branch had spent a long time reading letters from comrade R.Cox, but he hadn't even bothered to come to Conference. It was contemptible that Guildford were not prepared to debate in the Party's democratic decision-making forum.

P.Lawrence(SW London): obviously this resolution couldn't be the last word against the accusation that we hold a theory of sudden, apocalyptic revolution. We don't hold this view as for us the revolution would be one political event against a background of all kinds of social developments that would pre-dispose the change from capitalism to socialism.

The amendment(V19) to the resolution(V18) was carried 81-15 and the resolution, as amended, was carried 115-25.

V21 "On the Membership Application Questionnaire, add Question 7 as follows: 'Why can Socialism not come about gradually?' and renumber subsequent questions" (W London).

B.Johnson(Swansea) suggested that the Report of the Form A Scrutiny Committee be taken in conjunction with this motion. Agreed.

H. Edwards (W London), opening, said that the branch felt it important to include a question on gradualism in the questionnaire, though they had noted that the Form A Committee was against questions about how socialism could not be established.

B. Johnson (Swansea): his branch was against any additional questions. Gradualism was already covered by a previous question on reforms. Swansea also wanted to know why the EC had added an extra question to the questionnaire. As this had been adopted by Conference it could only be changed by Conference.

C. Pinel (Manchester): the questionnaire was already long enough, so Manchester were against the resolution.

E. Goodman (EC Member): the question of reforms was not necessarily the same as that of the gradual evolution towards socialism through co-operatives.

L. Cox (EC Member), replying to the Swansea question, said that the EC had merely accepted a change to the wording suggested by the Form A Committee in the light of their experience.

B. Johnson (Swansea): it still remained true that an additional question had been added without a Conference decision.

L. Cox (EC Member): the EC had never accepted that only Conference could decide on the questionnaire.

P. Lawrence (SW London) hoped this matter wasn't going to be pursued too much. If the Forms A Committee had made a proposal to improve the questionnaire and the EC had accepted it that was perfectly in order.

The resolution (V21) was lost 49-77.

C. Slapper (Islington) and R. Smith (Islington) moved a floor resolution:

"That Conference endorses the recommended rewording of Question 8 on the membership questionnaire, as contained in the report of the Forms A Scrutiny Committee, and recommends the EC therefore to amend that question from (1) 'Why does the Socialist Party believe that parliamentary methods must be used to capture political power for the achievement of socialism?' to (2) 'Why do Socialists maintain that democratic methods such as, in this country, parliamentary elections, must be used to capture political power for the achievement of socialism'".

C. Slapper (Islington), opening, said that the Forms A Committee were recommending a change from "parliamentary methods" to "democratic methods" such as, in this country, parliamentary elections". This was a good change as, in the minds of some of our opponents, "parliamentary methods" were identified with using parliament to get reforms, or reformism. Also, the original wording was rather W Europe-centred: many parts of the world did not yet have political democracy and so "the democratic methods" socialists were committed to adopting there too might have to be other than parliamentary.

R. Smith (Islington), seconding, said that Parliament was not the only democratic road. In fact the British Parliament had inherited all sorts of non-democratic relics from the time of the struggle of the merchant capitalists against the feudal kings.

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey) and J. Lee (Enfield and Haringey) moved an amendment: "insert after 'democratic' 'legislative' and delete 'such as, in this country, parliamentary elections'".

J. Bradley: we were committed to democratic electoral action as opposed not just to undemocratic action but also to what were claimed to be other forms of democratic action such as workers' councils or a general popular upsurge. From our point of view it was vital that electoral procedures be used in the establishment of socialism as this was the only incontestable way of demonstrating that a majority wanted socialism. There was also the legislative aspect: common ownership would have to be introduced by legal enactment.

S. Coleman (Islington) was opposed to the inclusion of the word "legislative" as Socialism couldn't be introduced by a law.

A. Buick (EC Member): to delete "such as, in this country, parliamentary elections" would go completely against what the Forms A Committee were recommending. They wanted to allow for other forms of democratic action, to achieve socialism, in countries without a parliamentary system, such as, dare it be said, workers' councils or a popular upsurge.

The amendment was lost 2-24 and the Floor Resolution carried 27-0.

B. Johnson (Swansea) then moved: "This Conference recommends that the EC adheres to the resolution passed by 87 Conference on the new Questionnaires. There being no seconder, the motion fell.

V22 "This Conference reaffirms the Party's position on co-operatives as set out, for instance, in the chapter on 'The Co-operative Movement' in the 1942 edition of Questions of the Day, that is:

'In the minds of many workers the Co-operative movement is regarded as being in some way linked up with socialism. When the co-operators take up this attitude they claim in justification that Robert Owen, the co-operative pioneer, was actively concerned for some part of his life with possible means of escape from the capitalist system (...)

Robert Owen's solution was that small groups of workers should try to establish self-supporting 'villages of industry', in which there would be no employer, no master. They would constitute, as it were, little oases in the desert of capitalism, owning the 'land and means of production in common'. He anticipated that the movement would grow until finally the workers would have achieved their emancipation (...).

The Co-operative Movement cannot solve the basic economic problems of the workers as a whole, or even of the co-operative societies' own members. Its success is merely the success of an essentially capitalist undertakings(...).

Co-operation cannot emancipate the working class. Only Socialism will do that. The workers cannot escape from the effects of capitalism by retiring into Owen's 'villages of industry'. They must obtain for society as a whole the ownership of the means of production and distribution, which are the property of the capitalist class. For this they must organise to control the machinery of government. Once possessed of power they can then reorganise society on a socialist basis of common ownership. Owen's original aims can only be achieved by socialist methods" (W London).

J. Usher (W London), opening, said the text in question affirmed the Party case even if it wasn't perfect. He himself had doubts about, for instance, saying "Co-operation cannot emancipate the working class".

B. Johnson (Swansea): Swansea had very deep reservations about this motion.

S. Coleman (Islington): the resolution was pointless as there were no followers of Robert Owen in the Party. So why did we need to dig out a resolution from 1942 to re-affirm our case against Owenism?

C. Skelton (non-delegate): even if it was no longer the case today, in 1942 "Co-operation" with a capital C had been understood to refer to the Co-operative Party and Movement and not to the "co-operation" with a small c that would be needed amongst the working class to establish socialism. The resolution (V22) was carried 122-21.

The Chair proposed to return to the question of the European elections. T. Kilgallon (Newcastle) explained the reasons why Newcastle wanted to stand. They had first intended contesting the municipal elections this year, but discovered that these would not be taking place till 1990. Contesting the Euro-elections would be to cover a larger area of the country than ever before. This would be useful for branch members and sympathisers and would perhaps bring back members who had become inactive. There were 16 members in the branch about half of whom were active. The cost would be £1250, consisting of £750 deposit and £500 for manifestos, campaign meetings, etc. £635 had now been raised from members and sympathisers and pledges for a further £100 had been obtained. The branch would also be writing to other branches and Companion parties and would be holding fund-raising events (raffles, socials, etc); they were convinced that they could raise the money. We are a political party and £1200 was not too much to spend compared with other expenses such as the rates on Head Office and the waiving of dues. They had been told by the EC that no money would be available centrally, so they would now try to raise the £500 themselves too. They

EC and Conference approval to give the largest number ever of voters a chance to vote for Socialism.

C.Slapper(Islington): the EC had turned down the campaign on grounds of cost. Yesterday, Newcastle had seemed to say that they were going ahead anyway, but they must have meant that they wanted to go ahead. The EC's objection was purely financial and it wasn't on to ask the branch to hand over to central funds the money they had already raised. We should now say: OK, go ahead as long as you can raise the money yourselves. Islington had wanted to contest the last European elections, but never did because of a certain amount of stalling by the EC. As a result Rule 28 was changed to include contesting European elections and now was the first chance to test the sincerity of this change. We must not make the same mistake as last time.

J.Usher(W London) and B.Johnson(Swansea) moved:

"That the EC be advised by this Conference to endorse the Newcastle election campaign contingent on the expenses being raised independent of central funds".

J.Usher(W London), opening, said that he personally didn't think that contesting elections was useful at this stage, but if that was what Newcastle wanted to do, the EC had no right to stop them. The EC had been wrong to ask Newcastle to send the money they had raised to Head Office.

B.Johnson(Swansea), seconding, said that the enthusiasm was evidently there and should not be stamped on.

D.Donnelly(Glasgow): it was not just a question of finance or enthusiasm, but of hard physical facts. Their Form C indicated that Newcastle branch had only 16 members, that average attendance at branch meetings had been 5 members and 1 visitor, that SS sales were low. Newcastle were one of our weaker branches. To contest an election you needed an active branch and fairly large numbers. Permission to contest just could not be given.

D.Chambers(Birmingham): Newcastle should get not just our moral support but also our physical support. He himself would be going up to Newcastle to help P.Shannon(Lancaster): the Newcastle delegate's speech was the only encouraging thing he'd heard all Conference.

H.Young(NW London): Enthusiasm was OK, but the facts had to be faced. In contesting elections now we were simply banging our heads against a brick wall. If he'd have been on the EC he'd have voted down the Newcastle request.

R.Headicar(Islington): the decision was not an easy one as there was so much sense in what comrade Donnelly had said, but we must have faith in local branches. Perhaps they were making a mistake, but we can't tell till afterwards. It would be churlish not to support them.

S.Coleman(Islington): an impressive case had been put for contesting and an impressive case had been put against it. He personally thought that comrade Donnelly had made out the stronger case. What was the alternative to contesting? He suggested a leafletting campaign and that Newcastle use some of the money they had collected to purchase £250 worth of Standards from Head Office to give away free.

H.Edwards(W London): the Party was short of funds and appeals for money had gone out. How could we justify spending £750 of this money on an election deposit? Nor if Newcastle sent an appeal round the Party could branches and members be expected to respond to both appeals.

P.Lawrence(SW London): there have always been two views on elections in the Party: the view that it was premature and the view that elections provided a good propaganda opportunity. A third view would be that if one group of members wanted to contest, they should be allowed to. Newcastle were in a difficult position since they needed our approval for what they wanted to do. What Comrade Donnelly had said had been appropriate, but nevertheless in the end Newcastle's wishes in the matter should over-ride other considerations.

T.Kilgallon(Newcastle): there were in fact 40-45 members on the books in the North East area including those of another branch, Seaham.

C.Pinel(Manchester): both Newcastle and Seaham branches had failed to send in Forms C on time, Seaham not at all. Under these circumstances contesting wasn't a serious proposition.

V.Vanni(Glasgow) advised Newcastle to contest the municipal elections first so as to gain some experience of elections.  
R.Marshall(E London): in view of the Party's desperate financial situation what money Newcastle could raise should go to Head Office. Nor should they compete with HO in appealing to branches for money.  
D.Deutz(EC Member): a resolution passed at last year's Conference had said we hadn't got the resources to contest national elections and so should concentrate on local elections. But if we hadn't the resources to contest national elections, how could we have them to contest the European elections where the constituencies were 7 or 8 times larger?  
B.Johnson(Swansea), winding up, said that what had emerged from the debate was that the criterion for deciding was: what did the branch want? They wanted to contest, so they should be allowed to go ahead.  
The Floor Resolution was carried by 14-11.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N°8: Developments in Russia and the Propaganda of the SPGB (NW London).

H.Young(NW London), opening, read a quote from Lenin to illustrate the degeneration and emasculation of the Russian regime today. Corruption was rife and the recent elections were a farce. 100 seats had been reserved for the Communist Party, 100 for the Academy of Sciences, etc. This was just like in the old Tsarist Duma, but the truth about Russia as a non-socialist dictatorship was coming out.

C.Skelton(non-delegate): a real change was going on in Russia. You now had demonstrations there in support of a candidate who the authorities didn't like. There was widespread discontent with the way things were run and with the Party's monopoly of power. Yeltsin had tapped that discontent over economic matters, hence his popularity. Gorbachev's consensual politics involved trying to get agreement to liberalising the political system while pushing economic reforms that would make people unemployed. That was why Russian workers were wary of perestroika; they saw their jobs as being at risk. Work harder was in fact Gorbachev's message to the working class. We should not go overboard about the demonstrations in Russia, even though we should welcome the fact that it was now possible to demonstrate there and not get locked up. There was still a long way to go before voters in Russia could elect who they wanted, let alone elect socialists.

R.Marshall(E London) asked if the NW London item had been about carrying out socialist propaganda in Russia.

H.Young(NW London): No, it wasn't suggesting this as if you advocated socialism in Russia you'd end up in jail.

P.Lawrence(SW London): what was the attitude of the Party to the slight slackening of the reins of control in Russia? Do we support the extension of greater democratic possibilities in Russia or are we indifferent to it? In his opinion, we should say that in general we do support any expansion of democratic practices in Russia.

R.Cook(Birmingham): what Gorbachev had learned from Reagan and Thatcher was that it was cheaper to run things through the market than by military means. Gorbachev was conceding nominal political democracy at the price of far greater economic control. This was simply a shift in the structure of power.

S.Easton(EC Member): Things were changing in Russia and opportunities were being thrown up for workers to express themselves. What was happening was in fact what we had been predicting for years: a liberalisation under the impact of economic development. The same thing was happening in Hungary where state and private enterprises were operating side by side. Of course we welcomed any democratic opportunities opened up to the workers, and workers should use them. We could even see something positive in the nationalist movements for all our opposition to their ideas.

S.Ross(NW London): the nationalist revolts in the Baltic were no more socialist than was nationalism in Scotland.

H.Young(NW London), winding up, said that we shouldn't support President Gorbachev's reforms. We should denounce them as a sham and a farce. He added that the Party nomenklatura in Russia were not a ruling class as their positions could not be bequeathed: there was no case of the son of

a Party leader who had become a capitalist by inheritance.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N°9: Are our arguments against capitalism and our arguments for socialism sufficiently attractive and interesting in themselves to gain workers' attention? Do they need bolstering by the addition of concrete models of non-hierarchical socialistic relationships, so that the not-so-obvious benefits of socialism are apparently obvious? (Swansea).

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N° 10: Is our propaganda sufficiently flexible to adjust for any shift in attitude amongst workers? (Swansea).

E. Johnson (Swansea), opening on both items, said the first went to the heart of the Party's case. Marx himself had spoken about the germs of future society coming into being within the old society. But we couldn't point to anything happening in capitalism and say 'here's a free society', 'here's a political model'. So what can we point to? What did Marx mean? What are the germs of future society that exist today? On Item 10, he said that there had been changes in working class opinion and attitudes on such matters as trade unions, leisure, child abuse and the handicapped. The trade unions had become exclusively concerned with the wages of their own members, the element of working class solidarity was no longer there. We should criticise this shift. On the other hand, we could welcome other shifts like those against child abuse and against discrimination against the handicapped.

P. Lawrence (SW London) welcomed the appearance of these items on the agenda as they addressed the problem of the development of the party as a practical, revolutionary socialist party. Marx had said that the communist, or socialist, movement must be a practical movement. We must make some proposals as to how bodies can operate on a non-hierarchical and co-operative basis. This was not a question of drawing ideal models of some ideal future society. We have to make proposals as to how we think those institutions that will continue into socialist society will be organised. This was vital to our propaganda. There was too much mere anti-capitalism in the Party, an abstract analysis of how capitalism worked. We could, for instance, say that factories would no longer be controlled by a Board of Directors in socialism, but by elected management committees which would control the day-to-day operation of productive units, hospitals, etc and be responsible to the democratic wishes of those working in them. It was absolutely vital to do this as it could change people's ideas.

R. Cook (Birmingham): Item 10 seemed to be saying that attitudes to child abuse, animal rights, etc should change not just in socialism but now also. This would make us sound like the Churches condemning certain forms of behaviour as immoral. It wasn't up to socialists to condemn and moralise about workers' behaviour, as we knew that it was social conditions that were to blame.

P. Shannon (Lancaster) understood the item, not as a call for a further elaboration of the details of socialist society, but as a call to practise what we preach. But what exactly did Swansea mean by "non-hierarchical socialistic relationships"? Were they talking about sexual politics?

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey): model experiments on a small scale don't convince people as objectors can always say 'yes, that works but only on a small scale; it couldn't work on a large scale, society-wide basis'. Also, these experiments quite frequently fail leading to disillusionment amongst those involved. And capitalist firms often utilised the results of such model experiments to control their workers. This was not to say that we shouldn't use the results of such experiments to invalidate the view that human nature was a barrier to socialism.

D. Donnelly (Glasgow): it was not possible to have concrete models of socialism now. It was impossible to have socialistic relationships in a capitalist society.

S. Coleman (Islington): we did say that children suffered from the family and from the state education system. But if we were against these we must have an alternative. The use of the word "socialistic" as by Guildford would be inappropriate, but there were indeed examples in existence of how

people could live without the state, employers and money with satisfactory human results. In London the teaching of sport in schools had largely become non-competitive, which was surely a good thing. As to sexual politics, workers had created different relationships.

B.Johnson(Swansea), winding up, denied that Swansea was being moralist. We had always said that workers' attitudes on race and sex must change even before socialist society was established, so why shouldn't we say that workers' attitudes had to change on other matters too? Basically, we wanted workers to behave in a humanistic way.

SUNDAY, 26 MARCH  
Afternoon

R.Critchfield(W London) reported on the results of the Workshop on "How the Party's Acquisition of Printing Equipment should affect the Organisation and Production of the Socialist Standard and Party Literature" that had been held that morning. A three-person committee had been set up to follow the discussion and report to the Party on it, but there had only been time to discuss technical questions concerning typesetting.

P.Lawrence(SW London) and A.Thomas(SW London)moved:

"This Conference recommends that the Party should develop its printing facilities by acquiring typesetting equipment plus a camera to be located at Head Office. To this end the EC should set up a special appeal for the necessary funds and take urgent steps to secure a commitment by members to typeset and correct the text of the Socialist Standard and paste up the artwork each month".

H.Cottis(E London) was against the motion. The matter required further consideration as we had been reckless in the past and acquired the wrong equipment.

G.Slapper(Islington):spending some money now could save more later.

S.Coleman(Islington): the bill from the printer (for typesetting,paste-up and corrections) was still around £600 a month despite the savings that had been made, whereas typesetting equipment would cost between £1000 and £2500 depending on the kind of machine we chose to acquire.

E.Goodman(EC Member) : typesetting (photocomposing) by our printer made up about £230 of his total bill of, since the pages had been reduced,about £500.

D.Deutz(EC Member) recalled that when the Party had bought the computer one of the reasons given was that it could be used for typesetting the Standard. Now we were being asked to purchase another machine to do the same thing. There should be a moratorium on the purchase of new machinery.

P.Lawrence(SW London),winding up, said that if we would no longer have to pay £500 a month to an outside printer, the matter should at least be seriously looked into.

The Floor Resolution was carried 20-1.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N°12:Should the Terms of Reference of the SSPC be amended so that the Editorial Committee are bound to give equal and fair consideration to articles written in different styles? Should articles of shorter length, making a few relevant points, and written in a straightforward style, be given an equal chance of inclusion in the Socialist Standard, subject to the political content being sound? (Islington).

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N°13: Should the back page of the Socialist Standard be adopted exclusively as an 'endpiece', where the previous month's events in the British/worldwide scenario can be dealt with in a witty and entertaining fashion? (Swansea).

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N°14: The advisability of varying the introductory article on page two of the Socialist Standard (Glasgow).

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N° 15: Should the Editorial Committee adopt a more flexible and contemporary approach to the contents of the 'Questions and Answer' page of the Socialist Standard? (Swansea).

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION N° 16: Should the priority of the SSPC be to interest and attract non-members? (Islington).

D.Donnelly(Glasgow): we still had not sorted out who the Standard was aimed at. Our primary target ought to be the first-time reader, but the Standard had acquired its own "house style" aimed at members and regular readers.

S. Coleman (Islington): the Standard may be aimed at first time readers but this didn't rule out articles for regular readers too.  
S. Headicar (Islington), opening on items 12 and 16, read out a letter from comrade J. Coxall, trainee member of the SSPC who was unable to be present. She was concerned that the articles that had been appearing in the Standard did not reflect the range of writing skills that existed in the Party. There should be shorter articles and articles on such subjects as football supporters and food additives. Our primary aim had to be to attract non-members not to please members.

M. Tenner (SSPC Member) said there was no discrimination against any material, of whatever length or on whatever subject, that put the Party case.

B. Johnson (Swansea), opening on items 13 and 15, said he had been pre-empted. He hoped the "Sting in the Tail" endpiece would continue but was concerned that the text of the Questions and Answer page had been changed without prior Conference approval.

D. Donnelly (Glasgow), opening on item 14, said he was glad to have been pre-empted by the SSPC on this.

L. Heath (Eccles): the Standard was not basic enough and contained too many long words.

J. Bradley (Enfield and Haringey) complained that the new Questions and Answer page made no mention of an overwhelming majority being necessary to establish socialism and not just a majority---

A Glasgow delegate: that's not the Party case, comrade.

J. Bradley ---nor about the need for sound trade union action. What the Standard needed was Sound Theory and Good English. New members should be discouraged from writing simplistic articles on political theory. What they should do was to write about their own experiences, at work, etc, from a socialist angle. Nor should it be assumed that first time readers knew nothing about politics, as some delegates seemed to be implying.

H. McClaughlin (Bolton), speaking on item 12, said there was a real problem of at who the Standard was directed. Was it a propaganda journal directed at non-members or was it an information/educational journal directed mainly at members and sympathisers? When there were more propagandistic articles members complained because they wanted an information/education journal. This was what the Standard used to be because in the past there had been other means of propaganda, but now it was the main means of propagating our ideas. The Standard in fact was trying to do a number of different things through the same vehicle, but we would never solve this problem as long as we had only one journal --whether the other journal was the super-glossy one favoured by some or the Eccles or Dundee Beano favoured by others.

R. Cook (Birmingham) spoke about the ideas his branch had set out in a circular. They had prepared for the workshop. The Standard was trying to do too many things: trying to be intellectual while being sold to kids in pubs. This meant that it wasn't sufficiently intellectual for those who wanted this. We had to face the fact that the Standard was now essentially an internal Party journal. If we wanted to change, there were only two broad avenues we could go down: to go tabloid or to assume magazine form. His branch favoured the latter; this didn't mean going "up market" since the magazine form was one of the two forms of publication that workers bought en masse --not political magazines but magazines about hobbies--, but it would mean a better quality cover and more interesting contents.

H. Cottis (E London): Standard sales had been falling over the years because we no longer had the same outlets as before like outdoor meetings, but we could still do door-to-door selling.

N. McCullough (WSP-Ireland): the Irish Party got its journal, Socialist View, distributed commercially. This was the progressive way; street corner selling, canvassing and pub sales were old-fashioned. They sold about 700-1000 of each issue, including about 400 through commercial channels. They had plans to expand this to the rest of Northern Ireland and then to the South. By this method they hoped to get SV sales up to 2000 by the end of the year, and then go on to 3000.

B. Johnson (Swansea) and R. Critchfield (W London) moved:

"This Conference recommends the EC to allow the SSPC to adopt a more flexible and contemporary approach to the contents of the Questions and Answer page of the Socialist Standard".

B.Johnson(Swansea), opening, said he was in favour of varying the Questions and Answer page but felt that the SSPC had been wrong to do this without prior Conference approval.

C.Slapper(Islington) asked if the SSPC could explained why they changed it.

G.Thomas(SSPC) explained that this had been done when the number of pages had been reduced from 20 to 16 to make more space for variable material. It might be changed back at a later date, with two or more versions alternating. The Floor Resolution was carried 18-1.

C.Skelton(non-delegate): the covers should be improved. Red was best as advertisers had discovered it was accessible to everyone.

S.Coleman(Islington): there was a link between content and distribution in that there is a lack of support for the Standard amongst some members of the Party. What was required was less concern for the Party and more for the Cause. The supposedly theoretical journal "Socialist Studies" produced by Camden and NW London branches was atrocious in terms of getting across our case seriously. One solution to the dilemma pin-pointed by Comrade McClaughlin would be to produce simple propaganda leaflets for free distribution while leaving the Standard more or less as it was.

C.Begley(Print Committee)said the Committee was coping, but could always do with more help.

R.Cook(Birmingham) and H.Cottis(E London)moved the adoption of the Report of the Executive Committee and Party Officers for 1988. This was agreed.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION No11:What is Sectarianism? (Islington)

S.Coleman(Islington)said, in view of the time factor and of the fact had produced a circular on the subject that was being circulated, the branch was not insisting that the item be discussed now.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION No17:The report of the Committee set up by the EC on the recommendation of the 1988 Autumn Delegate Meeting to investigate the desirability and possibility of the Party producing a pamphlet on the subject of human nature (Islington).

H.Walters(Islington) said that the Ad Hoc Committee had concluded there was a need for such a pamphlet. As an example he cited the article "Human Nature and Morality" that had appeared in the February Standard. This had mentioned "human nature" 9 times but had nowhere attempted to define it. Nor was there any mention of human behaviour either. Apparently the author thought there was no difference between the two. He should in fact have said human behaviour when he used the term human nature. Human behaviour was variable because it was learned. Human nature, on the other hand, was not learned and was not variable; it was in fact human nature to learn behaviour. This kind of article was misleading and was not very useful as Party propaganda. Human nature was the biological attributes that all human beings had in common, and so was not defined by reference to human behaviour.

D.Donnelly(Glasgow): it was a great idea to have a short pamphlet dealing with the human nature objection to Socialism, but it was obvious that this was not the kind of pamphlet that the Ad Hoc Committee had in mind. They wanted to be more ambitious and publish a pamphlet on the theory of human nature. But are members agreed on the theory? In fact are all scientists agreed on it? We shouldn't get involved in these sorts of argument. In their circular the Ad Hoc Committee had criticised those members who said 'human nature doesn't exist'. Well, he said this and he stood by it. Even if we had the money, the sort of pamphlet the Committee envisaged would not be a good propaganda tool, but rather be a scientific document containing ideas that were open to debate.

The Chair said that the time being 5 o'clock the Conference had to adjourn. Items 18 and 19 could not therefore be discussed.

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The total collection over the three days amounted to £425.59 (£89.59 on Friday afternoon, £174.34 on Saturday morning, £88.13 on Saturday afternoon, and £76.53 on Sunday afternoon.